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SUBJECT: PERIPHERAL: Various Aspects of Life in Latvia; Interrogation of a Soviet Defector (DS-774)

The 23-year old Russian source interrogated by the Special Research Division defected from a Soviet Army [redacted] unit in Hungary in early 1957. Not sent to Hungary until November 1956 after the major fighting was over, his defection appears to stem from much earlier family influence. The source had lived from 1948 until his induction into the Army [redacted] in the Latvian S.S.R. [redacted] While in Latvia, the source finished seven year school in 1951, and then worked off-and-on as a movie projectionist and truck driver. While certain aspects of his past life remain to be clarified, his bona fides have been established for positive intelligence debriefing.

This report treats miscellaneous aspects of life in Latvia, the reason why Russian settlers are allegedly returning to European Russia from Latvia, the source's experience in school, and his observations about local attitudes in Latvia. While very cooperative, the source has, unfortunately, only limited powers of observation and memory.

Settlers Return to European Russia

The source's family was only one of many which had moved to Latvia in the early post-war period because the living standard was higher there. Probably a subsequent equalization in living conditions between the two areas is involved in what the source reported as the return to European Russia of many of these early post-war settlers. The source said only that the inducement to go to Latvia no longer existed. Economic motivation for the return remains, however, the assumption on the part of the interrogating officer. The source repeatedly emphasized the feeling of insecurity of the non-Latvian settlers. Only those brought up to think "in the Soviet spirit" (sovetskim dukhom) felt that Soviet power could last in Latvia. The [redacted] was convinced that the day was coming when Soviet rule would be overthrown, and the "Russian" (including Ukrainians, Byelorussians, etc.) settlers would be butchered regardless.

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of their political attitudes. [redacted] B-6

One may speculate whether this insecurity is, in fact, the result of a modified approach on the part of the Soviet authorities toward the Latvians which has encouraged the latter, on the one hand, to be more independent in their attitude toward Russian nationals in the area and has, at the same time, given the local Russian settlers an impression that Soviet rule has been weakened. In this connection, the source recalled being told some years back by his sister, an accountant, how some decree which remained in effect for only three or four weeks directed that all official correspondence be written in Latvian. (Ed: Presumably, this was in the period shortly before Beriya's arrest).

The source could not provide any particular examples of anti-Russian feeling. He noted that animosity was more apparent in the small towns than in the cities. Occasionally, a Latvian storekeeper would refuse to answer questions in Russian, or Latvian girls would not speak to Russian boys. The source, however, married a Latvian girl (primarily because he first fathered her child), and marriages were not uncommon between the two peoples.

The basis of friction lay, of course, in the continued desire of the Latvian people to be independent. This feeling is particularly strong among the older generation which remembers how life was before the Soviet annexation. The source described Latvian youth as being "in a kind of fog", not really knowing what to think. For the adult Latvian, however, resentment focused on the collectivization policy, the bureaucracy which required five men to do the job of one, and the quality of the Communist officials who were often less intelligent than the people they were expected to command.

Russian Community [redacted]

The source said that 20 per cent of the population [redacted] B-6 consisted of settlers from European Russia or the Ukraine. This "Russian" colony broke down, in turn, into two groups, one pro-Soviet and the other neutral or anti-Soviet. To distinguish between these groups, the source drew the line between those who attended church and those who did not.

Non-Latvians continued into 1955 to control a significant number of posts in [redacted] party, government and other organizations as shown in the following list. B-6

Raikom – Up to 1952, the 1st Secretary was a Russian. In 1955, the 1st Secretary was a Latvian VITINA, 2nd Secretary

JOHNSON may also have been Latvian, and the 3rd Secretary PUIDA was probably a Ukrainian.

City Executive Committee (Gorizpolkom) - Chaired by a Latvian.

Raion Executive Committee (Raispolkom) - Chairman was Latvian, the two Deputies Russian.

M.T.S. - The director was Latvian but apparently had lived in the U.S.S.R. since he spoke better Russian than Latvian.

Road Repair (Ushosdor) - Headed by a Russian, TELISHEV.

Militia - Most of the personnel were Russian, but the Chief was a Latvian, Major ANDERSON, who spoke excellent Russian.

Procurator - A Jew.

Forest Industry (Lespromkhoz) - Headed by a Russian.

MGB - Under a command of a Russian, Major BORIS.

Industrial Combine (Promkombinat) - Now headed by a Latvian, formerly by a Russian. The latter had been removed in 1952 for drunkeness but promptly got a good job in a factory in Daugavpyls. A feuilleton in a Latvian paper complained over this.

Enlistment Bureau (Voenkomat) - Headed by a Russian.

Dosaaf - The source thought that it's chief, KOCHEROV, was Ukrainian.

Raw Materials Procurement (Zagotsyrvo) - Headed by a Russian.

Postal Services - Headed by a Latvian.

Housing Management (DomUprav) - Headed by a Russian.

Radpotrebsoyus - Headed by a White Russian.

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Education [redacted]

The city contained two Latvian seven-year and ten-year schools, and a Russian seven-year school. There was also a Zoological-Veterinary Tekhnikum for Latvians. The Latvian Middle School also gave evening courses (in Russian) after 1952 for Russian settlers who wished to complete middle-school by night courses.

The source was able to give a quite detailed break-down of student composition and an indication of their future after school. In his own case, he was bitter over what he claimed was a disparity in educational opportunity based on economic grounds. He said that he was unable to finish even ten years of schooling, whereas the daughter of the Director of Ushosdor attended the Ten-year school in Valtera, and the son of the militia chief was able to finish the Ten-year school in Daugavpyls. Apparently neither the urge for education on his part nor the financial support from home was sufficient for him to make the sacrifices necessary to go even to the evening school which opened locally.

The development of the Russian Seven-year school paralleled the influx of Russian colonists. In 1949, there were only four grades in the [redacted] Russian school, and its sixth and seventh grades in 1950 consisted of ten and eight persons, remaining about the same in 1951. When the source graduated, there were between 120 and 150 persons in the whole school with some 40 persons in each of the 5th and the 6th grade.

By nationality composition, the source's class consisted of five persons of Latvian descent, (but whose native language was Russian since they had emigrated to Latvia from European Russia), one Jew, one Uzbek, one Estonian and two Russians, including the source. The seventh grade the year before had contained four Russians, one Belorussian, two Latvians and a Jewess.

Initially, there was a higher percentage of students of Latvian origin in the source's school. At the time he graduated, he thought that no more than 2 or 3 per cent of the student body was Latvian. These Latvians were almost without exception people who had grown up in the U.S.S.R. and who spoke better Russian than Latvian. Similarly, a very few people of Russian origin who spoke better Latvian than Russian attended Latvian schools. In terms of sex, in the source's class there were six girls and four boys, whereas in the class above, the proportion was equal.

In terms of their futures, of the source's class, four persons went on to take the Russian-language evening school courses started at the Latvian middle school in 1952 (only one had to do part-time work as a loader), one girl flunked out of the school and married a sailor in Riga, the girl whose father was the Director of Ushosdor went to the 10-year school in Valtera, and three went to work immediately, including the source.

Of the class above the source's, one Russian boy went after graduation to the Radio Trade School in Riga, and was then sent to a

Hydrometereological Station at Dzheargzhan in Zhiganski raion in Siberia. (He got used to the area and settled down, marrying a Yakut). Another Russian, the son of a priest, moved to Riga where he attended an evening school. One Russian girl went to the four year Building Tekhnikum. A Latvian girl completed evening middle-school [redacted] and then worked for the raion party committee. A Jewish girl completed evening middle-school [redacted] worked as a pioneer leader, and then moved to Riga where she went to work in a kindergarden. A Latvian girl married a demobilized border guard soldier, and the pair of them got jobs with the raion fuel office Raitop. One boy was taken directly into the army, preventing him from helping to support his blind father and many brothers and sisters. The source's cousin moved with his father to Novgorod where he took a course as radioman with DOSAAF, was drafted, and ended up working in Talinn as a diesel mechanic for the Soviet Navy.

Only a small handfull of the source's fellow students went to church, including the source, his cousin, the girl who later attended the Building Tekhnikum in Riga, and the son of the priest. The school had its share, also, of those who tried to combine religion and political activism. One pioneer activist in the fourth grade read the bible in church at Easter time, and she was joined in church by a girl who later worked on the party raion committee (her father was a party activist but her mother a believer).

Considerable pressure was already put on the students in the seven-year school to join the Komsomol. While there were only three Komsomol members out of the eight students in the class ahead of the source's, he was one of only three students not to join the Komsomol of the ten pupils in his own class. He did not think that Komsomol membership was a prerequisite for higher education, but said it was useful if a person wanted to go to an Agricultural Mechanization School.

The bulk of the teachers in the seven-year school were Russians. The source had trouble remembering them, however, because the turnover was so high. Of the three Latvian teachers he could remember, one taught Latvian (given after the third grade), and another taught English to the fifth grade without, however, being able to speak Russian. (German was given in the sixth and seventh grades). The third Latvian (who knew eight languages) taught mathematics. Since the Raion Section of Peoples Education (RAIONO) was composed almost entirely of Latvians, it was difficult to keep a teacher who did not have its approval.

For The Consul General

Robert I. Owen

Robert I. Owen
Chief, Special Research Division

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